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SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

262 **Food.**—The chief foods of the *Tehuelche* were guanaco and ostrich meat, the latter being generally preferred as less lean. Armadillos, skunks, tuco tucos (*Ctenomys* sp.), and huemuls were also eaten (Roncagli, 1884, p. 771; Ibar Sierra, 1879, p. 54), but dogs were not (FitzRoy, 1839, 2:150). Grease, fat, and marrow were delicacies, as were also ostrich eggs. The later *Tehuelche*, ordinarily at least, avoided fish (Coan, 1880, p. 60; D'Orbigny, 1835–47, 2:100; 4:101; Bourne, 1853, p. 147; Musters, 1871, p. 201; Ibar Sierra, 1879, pp. 54–55; Borgatello, 1924, p. 16), not, apparently, from magico-religious motives; but near the coast the early *Tehuelche* consumed fish and mollusks (Oviedo, 1851–55, 2:40, 43, 45), the later *Tehuelche* some shellfish (Gervaise, *in* Dumont d'Urville, 1842, 1:278).

While meat was the basic diet, considerable quantities and varieties of plant food were eaten. By the early *Tehuelche* certain roots, "resembling parsnips," were eaten raw or cooked, and made into flour (Pigafetta, 1906, 1:50, 60, 78; Oviedo, 1851–55, 2:40, 43, 45); by the later *Tehuelche*, roots, roasted and made into flour; "wild potatoes," dug up from underground and eaten raw or cooked; seeds, "like mustard," ground between two stones; "a kind of spinach" and a few other plants; "wild dandelions"; barberries, wild currants, strawberries, piñoes (*Araucaria* sp.), apples (Juan de la Piedra [1779], 1837, 5:77; Coan, 1880, p. 119; Dumont d'Urville, 1842, 1:154–155, 279; Schmid, 1912, p. 24, with native names of six or seven roots and plants eaten; Musters, 1872, p. 199; Spegazzini, 1884, p. 238; Vignati, 1936, p. 598: cf. Spegazzini, 1884, p. 238; Outes, 1905, p. 253; and especially Vignati, 1936, p. 598, and 1941, for botanical identifications). The later *Tehuelche* chewed the gum which exuded from the incense bush (Musters, 1872, p. 199; Schmid, 1912, p. 28; Spears, 1895, p. 159: cf. details of [545] method of chewing in Hudson, 1926, pp. 125–126), as a pastime and dental cleanser. According to Vignati (1936, p. 602), some of them [276] chewed the leaves of *Chuquiraga avellanedae* "como excitante nervioso."

231 [241] The *Tehuelche* practiced no agriculture at all, and the early *Tehuelche* had no domesticated animals except the dog. They seem to have had at least two kinds of native dog, a larger long-haired one and a smaller one somewhat resembling the Scotch terrier (Cabrera, A., 1934, pp. 88–91; Spegazzini, 1884, pp. 232–233; Allen, 1920, pp. 476–478); a third kind, resembling the greyhound, was probably a cross between the Spanish galgo and the first of the above two (Cabrera, A., 1934, pp. 88–91). The smaller dogs were used mostly as pets, the larger ones in hunting.

231 177 **Horses.**—The horse was introduced after 1670, and before 1741, probably some time around 1725, from the Argentine *Araucanians*,

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Fitz-Roy (1839, 2:172) reported that the *Alacaluf* traded pieces of iron pyrites, used for striking fire, to the *Tehuelche*.

### SOCIAL LIFE

**Marriage and the family.**—Direct information is available only for the later *Tehuelche;* our chief information on the domestic culture of the later *Tehuelche* comes from Sánchez Labrador, Viedma, Fitz-Roy, Musters, and Spegazzini.

Premarital chastity was seemingly rather strictly observed by girls. They were free to choose their husbands. Fitz-Roy (1839, 2:152) reported that sometimes girls were betrothed while very young [child betrothal!]. Boys married around the age of 20; girls from 15 to 18 or so. The groom gave presents to the bride's father or parents; these presents were in some measure at least a bride-price; the father or parents of the bride also gave presents of equal value, which in case of later separation were the property of the bride (Musters, 1871, pp. 177–178; 1872, p. 201). The girl was brought by her father or the groom to the latter's toldo, where a wedding feast was given, including mares' meat. It was unlucky for any of the offal or meat of the mares to be eaten by the dogs. The shaman sang and gave advice at weddings. Residence was generally patrilocal. According to Viedma (1837 b, p. 74), a "cacique" always married the daughter or sister of another cacique.

Marriage was mostly monogamous. Some men, however, had two wives; rarely three in the later 19th century, but earlier some had "four, five, or even more" (Fitz-Roy, 1839, 2:152), and even five to eight (Sánchez Labrador, 1936, p. 73). No polyandry is reported (however, see *Poya*, p. 160); nor is either the sororate or levirate.

Wives were generally well-treated as well as loved. Wife beating was very rare. Adultery was not uncommon; in case of unfaithfulness on the part of a wife, her paramour suffered the penalty, not she (Viedma, 1837 b, p. 74). Divorce was uncommon, being usually sought by the wife. A man was not allowed to look toward his father-in-law when in conversation with him (Musters, 1871, p. 184). The aged were respected and well cared for.

**Etiquette.**—Proper names were not mentioned (Bourne, 1853, p. 150). Hospitality was the rule, to traveling strangers as well as to friends. Certain formalities were observed when two parties approached and came together, including answers to the host's questions before delivering a message (Musters, 1871, pp. 184–185). The relative absence of formalities on entering a tent (Moreno, 1879, p. 226) contrasted with *Araucanian* etiquette in this regard.

Cleanliness of body was considered desirable, and bathing in the river was common; there was also a certain ideal of toldo cleanliness;

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but in neither case did practice measure up to ideal, to judge from the abundance of body vermin and from descriptions of toldos. Body lice were commonly eaten.

### POLITICAL LIFE

Our best source on political life is Viedma. Musters, D'Orbigny, and Borgatello rank next in order as sources.

There were no sibs, no secret or other societies, and no ruling caste or marked social stratification.

**The band.**—The basic *Tehuelche* economico-political unit was the band, each with its own headman. There was no peace-time paramount chief of all the *Tehuelche*, or of either of the two great divisions, northern and southern. According to Fitz-Roy (1839, 2: 131), the *Tehuelche* of his time were divided into four groups or bands of about 400 adults each, each band under its own headman. D'Orbigny, however, who made his observations in 1829 just 4 years prior to Fitz-Roy's visit, states that the *Tehuelche* were divided into a great number of bands (1839, 2: 97–98)—a statement that is in closer agreement with most of our earlier and more recent sources.

To judge from our scattered data, these bands were usually, though not always, small. In 1749 there came to Pilar mission three *Tehuelche* caciques with 80 toldos, each toldo sheltering 3 or 4 families, and the families averaging 5 persons each (Sánchez Labrador, 1936, p. 119)—thus, about 400-530 souls on the average per cacique. One band met by the Malaspina expedition in 1789 had 60 members in all (Lehmann-Nitsche, 1914, p. 8). Other estimates are: At most 30 to 40 families per band (D'Orbigny, 1835–47, 2: 97); 5 to 30 families (Spegazzini, 1884, p. 229); never more than 20 toldos found in one camp (Borgatello, 1924, p. 20); and one large band, Mulato's, with over 500 persons (ibid., p. 134).

Some insight into the composition and functions of the band may be derived from Fitz-Roy, D'Orbigny, and later writers. Each of Fitz-Roy's four bands had its own cacique or headman, and each claimed "a separate though ill-defined territory" as its exclusive hunting ground; at times all four bands would foregather in one place; encroachment by members of one band on the hunting ground of another led to battles (Fitz-Roy, 1839, 2: 131). Each toldería had its own territory, two or three of them on the banks of the Río Negro (D'Orbigny, 1835–47, 2: 98). Bands were made up of related or friendly families (Spegazzini, 1884, pp. 228–229). Each small band was composed of relatives and friends; each claimed exclusive hunting rights on its own territory, trespass being cause for war, and the most frequent cause (Borgatello, 1924, pp. 19–20).

2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
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ment of Mr. Clarke, that his people intended to winter in their present encampment, and then proceed northwards; but did not seem at all disposed to welcome the addition of an Englishman to his party, urging the difficult nature of the road, length of time, chances of fights, &c., &c. However, I hoped that during the enforced delay opportunities would arise of improving our acquaintance, and obtaining his consent. I was much struck with the grave and dignified bearing of the old chief. Standing fully six feet, and with a well-proportioned muscular frame, no one would have guessed him to have passed his sixtieth year; and whether vaulting on a bare-backed steed, or leading the chase, he displayed an agility and endurance equal to that of any of the younger men: his thick black hair was slightly streaked with grey; and the bright intelligent eyes, aquiline nose, and thin firm lips were very unlike the popular idea of Patagonian features; a retreating forehead rather marred the expression of his face, which was, however, grave and thoughtful, and at times strikingly intellectual. Months passed in his company gave me afterwards ample opportunity of studying his powers of reflection, which were great, and often found expression in pithy and amusing sayings. Although particularly neat in his dress, and cleanly in his habits, he was troubled, like all the Indians, with vermin; and one night he roused me up to have a smoke, and after sitting for some time, apparently lost in deep thought, he remarked, 'Musters, lice never sleep!' He would sometimes, but rarely, indulge in intoxication, but never quarrelled, and it was an understood thing that either he or his brother Tankelow should on occasions of a general drinking bout remain sober to protect their families. He was himself childless, and had adopted a little terrier named Ako, which enjoyed the place and honours of an only child; but he displayed great affection towards his nephews and nieces, some one or other of whom might often be seen in his arms on a march, or after the return from the chase. During our first acquaintance I was most pleased

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markable. When the disturbances and fighting were going on they rarely ate anything: also when travelling as 'chasquis,' or messengers, they will not unfrequently go for two and even three days without tasting food. In our expedition into the Cordillera we remained over forty-eight hours without food except wild fruit, and, although I at first suffered from hunger, my companions did not appear to be in any way inconvenienced. As a Chilian deserter remarked on one occasion, it was all very well for them to go on without eating; 'but we can't—we've not so much fat.' Their strength of arm is very great, and the distance to which they can throw the ostrich bola is truly astonishing: thus I have seen Crimè and some others ball an ostrich over seventy yards distant. When cutting wood in the Cordillera with Hinchel, a Chilian deserter and myself had cut a tree through, and, having fastened a lazo to the top branch, were endeavouring to drag it down, but its branches became entangled in another tree, and we could not stir it. Hinchel, seeing our difficulty, came up, and with one well-directed, vigorous tug cleared it from the branches and brought it to the ground.

Mr. Clarke also informed me that when he was ill with fever, and had to be removed from the Almacen to the lower house on the island, on account of the noise made by the drunken Indians, Wáki mounted, and, taking him in his arms, rode down seemingly unencumbered by the burden. Their faces, of course, vary in expression, but are ordinarily bright and good-humoured, though when in the settlement they assume a sober, and even sullen, demeanour. Wáki and Cayuke, two friends of mine, are particularly present to my recollection as having always had a smile on their faces. Their ever-ready laughter displays universally good teeth, which they keep white and clean by chewing 'maki,' a gum which exudes from the incense bush, and is carefully gathered by the women and children. It has a rather pleasant taste, and is a most excellent dentifrice, worthy to rival Odonto or Floriline, and it is used simply as

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such, and not, as Monsieur Guinnard* says, because their greediness is so great that they must chew something. Their eyes are bright and intelligent, and their noses—though, of course, presenting different types—are as a rule aquiline and well-formed, and devoid of the breadth of nostril proper to the ordinary ideal of savage tribes. The peculiar prominence over the eyebrows has been noticed by all observers, and retreating foreheads, though observable, are exceptional. The thick masses of hair, and the obvious risk, which would deter the most zealous craniologist from endeavouring to measure their heads, must be deemed sufficient excuse for my not being able to state whether they are dolichokephalic or brachykephalic; a point, however, which I confess did not particularly attract my observation; but, for the partial comfort of anthropologists, be it noted that both Chilians and myself interchanged hats with some Tehuelches, especially Orkeke and Hinchel, without finding misfits. The complexion of the men is reddish brown, that is to say when cleansed from paint, and, like an old picture, restored to their pristine tint, which is not quite so deep as to warrant Fitzroy's comparison of it to the colour of a Devon cow.

[302] The scanty natural growth of beard, moustaches, and even eyebrows, is carefully eradicated by means of a pair of silver tweezers, and I was often urged to part with my beard, and undergo this painful operation, but I naturally objected to comply with the request. The men's heads are covered with thick, flowing masses of long hair, of which they take great care, making their wives, or other female relatives, brush it out carefully at least once a day. Very few appeared to have grey hair; though there were a few exceptions, one very old man's hair being of a snowy whiteness, which contrasted strangely with his tawny face. The women have, as far as I could judge, an average height of about five feet six inches: they are very strong in the arms, but seldom walk beyond fetching the supplies of wood and water, all their journeys

* 'Three Years' Slavery,' p. 233.

2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
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the paint—which I had left off—not wishing to appear as a noble savage to the new comers. The paint for the face is composed of either red ochre or black earth mixed with grease obtained from the marrow bones of the game killed in the chase, all of which are carefully husbanded by the women, and when opportunity offers pounded and boiled in the large pots; the grease and gelatine being carefully skimmed off and secured. On state occasions, such as a birth feast, and for a dance, the men further adorn themselves with white paint, or powdered gypsum, which they moisten and rub on their hands, and make five white finger-marks over their chests, arms, and legs. The usual morning toilette is simple; after the plunge in the river, which is almost always the first thing, except of course when circumstances prevent it, indulged in by both sexes, who bathe scrupulously apart, and generally before daylight. The men's hair is dressed by their wives, daughters, or sweethearts, who take the greatest care to burn any hairs that may be brushed out, as they fully believe that spells may be wrought by evil-intentioned persons who can obtain a piece of their hair. From the same idea, after cutting their nails, the parings are carefully committed to the flames. After the hair-brushing, which is performed by means of a rude hand-brush, the women adorn the men's faces with paint; if in mourning they put on black paint, and if going to fight, sometimes put a little white paint under the eyes, which assists in contrast to the other in giving a savage expression. The women paint each other's faces, or if possessed, as sometimes occurs, of a fragment of looking-glass, paint their own. Both sexes tattoo on the forearm, by the simple process of puncturing the skin with a bodkin, and inserting a mixture of blue earth with a piece of dry glass: the usual patterns consist of a series of parallel lines, and sometimes a single triangle, or a double triangle, the upper one resting on the apex of the lower. I myself had one line tattooed by a fair enslaver, and confess that the process was rather painful.

2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
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Indians have a good deal of regard for personal cleanliness, and besides the morning ablutions enjoy bathing when encamped near a river, swimming and diving for hours together. They also are scrupulously careful as to the cleanliness of their toldos and utensils, and will, if they can obtain soap, wash up everything they may be possessed of. Notwithstanding these precautions, they are very much afflicted by vermin, which effect a firm lodgment in the wool of their mantles. This may be attributed to their mode of life, and their food, as well as to the materials of their clothing; and any traveller who wishes to sojourn with the Indians must make up his mind to subject himself to these inflictions, to which, however (*experto crede*), he will soon become inured. Their method of hunting and of cooking the meat obtained by the chase has been fully described in a previous chapter. Among the arms and implements figured in the illustration will be found (figs. 9 and 10) the weapons chiefly employed in the pursuit of game, namely, the bolas fitted with two balls called 'chumè,' for capturing the ostrich, and those with three called 'yachiko,' for guanaco hunting, which are similar to those used by the Gauchos in the Argentine Provinces. The balls are generally of stone, but sometimes white metal or copper balls are employed, procured in the settlements, which require no covering, and are more and more coming into fashion of late years; iron balls also, or iron ore, obtained and hammered into the requisite shape by the Tehuelches themselves, are common; these are for the round striking ball or balls: but the oval-shaped hand-ball, which is grasped in the hand, and is necessarily lighter by at least one-third than the other, is generally made of the soft vesicular lava which abounds in so many districts. The tough light thong for swinging balls round the head is generally made, as previously described, of ostrich or guanaco sinews plaited in four plaits, the length of which should be between seven and eight feet. It is always best to ball a quarry when galloping in an exact

3: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1872
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these necklaces, and adorn their knife sheaths, belts, and horse gear with silver studs or plate, and such as can afford it indulge in silver spurs and stirrups. The women furthermore lengthen their hair artificially, adorning the long tails with blue beads and silver pendants, but this only happens on state occasions. Both sexes smear their faces and occasionally their limbs with paint. This paint is composed of either red ochre or a black earth mixed with grease, obtained by boiling out the marrowbones of the game killed in the chase; they also tattoo on the forearm by the simple process of puncturing the skin with a bodkin, and inserting a mixture of blue earth with a piece of dry grass.

On state occasions, such as a feast on the birth of a child, the men further adorn themselves with white paint—a powdered gypsum, which they moisten and rub on their hands, and thus make five white finger-marks over their chests, arms, legs, etc. Nearly every morning the men have their hair brushed out with a rude description of brush, by their wives, or if unmarried, their sisters or female friends, who take great care to burn any hair that may be brushed out, as they fully believe that spells may be worked by evil intentioned persons who can obtain a piece of their hair or nails. After the hair-brushing is finished, the women adorn the men's faces with paint; if in mourning they put on black paint, and if going to fight, sometimes put a little white paint under the eyes, which assists, in contrast to the other, in giving a savage expression. The women paint each other's faces, or if they possess a small piece of looking-glass, paint their own. The women on the eve of their wedding-night cover their bodies all over with white paint, and a child on its birth is also similarly whitened.

The tents or toldos of these people, called by themselves "kou", much resemble those of our gipsies, though they are much larger, loftier, and of a squarer form. It is simply and speedily constructed. A row of forked posts, about three feet high, are driven into the ground, and a ridge pole laid across in front of these, at a distance of about six feet; a second row five feet high with a ridge pole; and at the same distance a third row, six feet high, are fixed. A covering, made from forty to fifty full-grown guanaco skins sewn together, and smeared with a mixture of grease and red ochre, is drawn over from the rear, and secured by thongs to the front poles. Hide curtains fastened between the inner poles partition off the sleeping places, and the baggage, piled round the sides, excludes the cold blast.

The duty of pitching and striking the toldos, as well as of loading the hides and poles on the horses, devolves on the women, who show great strength and dexterity in the work. The furniture of the toldo consists of a few hides, bolsters formed

5: Bourne T-5 (1849) 1874
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earnest business that calls their faculties into full exercise, their features light up with unexpected intelligence and animation. In fact, as one becomes familiar with them, he will not fail to detect an habitual expression of "secretiveness" and duplicity, which he will wonder he did not observe sooner. They are almost as imitative as monkeys, and are all great liars; falsehood is universal and inveterate with men, women and children. The youngest seem to inherit the taint, and vie with the oldest in displaying it. The detection of a falsehood gives them no shame or uneasiness. To these traits should be added a thorough-paced treachery, and, what might seem rather inconsistent with their other qualities, a large share of vanity, and an immoderate love of praise. They are excessively filthy in their personal habits. Hydrophobia, so to speak, is a prevailing distemper; they never wash themselves. Hands and faces are covered with dirt, so thick, and of such ancient deposit, that their natural color only appears in spots, laid bare by the mechanical loosening and displacement of some of the strata, which curiously variegates the surface. It is hardly necessary to remark that such a condition of the skin is highly favorable to the increase and multiplication of "the moving creature that hath life," wherewith their persons are abundantly peopled.

The women are proportionally smaller than the men, and rather inclined to embonpoint. The old chief had four wives, though he had probably never heard of Mahomet or his domestic laws. The rest of the tribe had only one wife apiece. The women erect the wigwams, provide fuel and cook, — if the operation should be dignified with that name, — in short, all the drudgery falls to their lot They are